

gritted her teeth and considered, for a fleeting moment, committing a horrible crime. The homicidal thoughts scared Betty, and she wisely laid the baby on the floor and banged out the screen door and stood under the porch light's yellow glow — mosquito bait — as she filled her lungs, again and again, with the compelling nicotine. Her next door neighbor pounded on their common wall and shouted, "WHY THE HELL DON'T YOU SHUT THAT GODDAMN KID UP?"

And here came Betty's girl-friend Evelyn's boy-friend Butch sneaking up the stairs. Betty lit another cigarette and said, "Don't even think about it tonight; I'm baby-sittin' Baby Godzilla." "I know," said Butch, rubbing a hand over his shiny bald scalp. "I could hear the kid screamin' from the street. Whadaya doin' to her, torture or what?"

"She wants Mom, wants the tit is all." "I don't blame her," Butch said, then, "Hey, I got an idea: Gimme yours." "My what?" "Your tit. Hand it over." Butch and Betty had been a secret item, clandestine lovers, for six months now. He could ask her this; she could comply. She unbuttoned her blouse and slipped her breast prothesis out of her bra and said, "I don't know what foolishness you're up to; I just wish I had me a video camera to catch it. I gotta feelin' you're gonna go in there and make an idiot of yourself."

Butch came, unannounced, up over the back of the couch with the breast, hovered it an inch above Babette's nose. The baby grabbed the rubber, felt her great grandmother's body heat with her chubby hands, and was satisfied. She kissed the pink nipple, but before she could get rolling, Butch pulled the decoy away and quickly thrust the bottle between her still-pursed lips.

BUTCH EXPERIENCES THE RAPTURE

Butch and his live-in girl-friend got in a fight over religion. Evelyn had gotten serious about the issue after her change of life and she was trying to drag Butch along with her. He went to one of the services — down in the valley at the old fast-food fried chicken joint the parishioners had converted to a place of worship — just to keep the peace, to keep his woman happy, but the young minister with the gleaming white teeth was so quick to pass the plate — and Evelyn was so quick to toss the greenbacks into it — that Butch got disgusted and said, "Fuck this shit," loud enough for everybody in the place to hear, and then he stamped out the door with Evelyn steaming on his tail.

The couple got into an obscenity-laced screaming match in the parking lot that got physical. Evelyn ended up with a split lip and a broken front tooth; Butch ended up with an eye that was so damaged by one of Evelyn's sharp fingernails he would require hospitalization, the services of an ophthalmologist. He drove off the parking lot with one hand pressed to his face to keep — it felt to him — his eye from slithering on its nerve bundle out of its socket where it would dangle sickeningly an inch below his jaw.

Evelyn, unaware that the entire congregation had witnessed the altercation, burst back into the church (the folks had scurried back to their pews when they saw her coming) and threw her hands into the air and shouted, "IT WAS THE RAPTURE: JESUS CAME AND SCOOPED MY BUTCH AWAY!" And in the third pew from the back door, Bob, who had been dragged in by his wife, Glenda, said, "Somebody's gonna come and scoop you up, you crazy bitch, and you can bet your ass it won't be Jesus." But the "HALLELUJAH'S" that swelled up after Evelyn's proclamation drowned out most of Bob's sentence, saving him from certain ostracism, and a probable beating.

THE ANDY WARHOL BLUES

Clete is stick-thin, but his beer belly — a jiggly little pot that hung over his belt — got him into the Old Fat Guys Soccer League with his portly next door neighbor, Ellis....

In their first game, Clete tried to 'head' the ball and caught it on the cheek. The impact turned his face into a momentary gargoyle and his comb-over swatch of hair into a gravity-defying fan, as captured by the local newspaper's photographer.

The camera also caught Ellis a microsecond after he missed a kick that was meant to score a goal from mid-field: his legs formed a V in the air, his chin sat on his chest and his butt pointed, from three feet in the air, toward the hard, cold ground.

The pictures ran on the front page the next day, and Clete and Ellis were minor celebrities for awhile.

THE LIVE ONES

The two women sitting at the table with Ellis Leahy were enormous — at least three hundred pounds apiece — and painted and powdered to kill. Their coiffures were short